

**Paper 1 · Section A focus paper · Social Influence**

Topic mock · 2026 · Maximum mark: 36 (AS) · 40 (A-level)

Questions 01 to 09 are identical for AS and A-level. Question 10 (the essay) is worth **12 marks at AS** and **16 marks at A-level** — separate level descriptors are provided for each version below. Indicative content is not exhaustive; credit any other valid points. Specialist vocabulary follows AQA's 2025 *Subject specific vocabulary*.

**A Social Influence****0 1**AO1 · 1 mark multiple choice

*Which one of the following best describes internalisation?*

**Answer: B — A public and private change in behaviour and opinion that is genuinely accepted.**

A = compliance; C = compliance driven by NSI; D = obedience.

**0 2**AO2 · 1 mark multiple choice

*Which one of the following is the clearest example of informational social influence (ISI)?*

**Answer: C — Looking at how other people behave in an emergency to work out what to do.**

A and B describe NSI (wanting to fit in); D describes compliance.

**0 3**AO1 · 1 mark multiple choice

*Which one of the following best describes a person with an internal locus of control?*

**Answer: C — "What I do shapes what happens to me — I am in charge of my own life."**

A, B and D all describe an external locus of control.

0 4

AO1 · 4 marks short answer

Outline normative social influence (NSI) and informational social influence (ISI) as explanations of conformity.

**Marks for this question: AO1 = 4 marks**

- **2 marks** for a clear outline of NSI: conformity driven by the desire to be accepted / fit in / avoid social rejection. Typically produces compliance.
- **2 marks** for a clear outline of ISI: conformity driven by the desire to be right; the person looks to others as a source of information, especially in ambiguous or difficult situations. Typically produces internalisation.

1 mark for a limited or muddled outline of each. Credit clear identification of the contrast — NSI driven by acceptance vs ISI driven by accuracy.

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0 5

AO2 · 4 marks application

Explain Aisha's behaviour using one or more variables affecting conformity investigated by Asch (1956).

**Marks for this question: AO2 = 4 marks**

- **4 marks** — Clear, coherent explanation engaging effectively with the stem; uses at least one Asch variable accurately; links the variable precisely to a feature of Aisha's situation.
- **3 marks** — Clear engagement but limited detail.
- **2 marks** — Definitions accurate but limited application.
- **1 mark** — Brief, partial answer.

**Indicative content:**

- **Unanimity** — all four previous pupils gave the same wrong answer; Asch found conformity dropped from 32% to 5.5% when a dissenter broke ranks.
  - **Group size** — Asch found conformity rose to ~32% with three or more confederates. Aisha is facing four prior wrong answers, well above this threshold.
  - **Task difficulty** — although the maths task is unambiguous, the high achievers all agreeing may make Aisha doubt her own working (NSI/ISI link).
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Use one situational variable from Milgram's research to explain Tom's behaviour.

**Marks for this question: AO2 = 4 marks**

- **4 marks** — Clear, coherent explanation engaging effectively with the stem; identifies one situational variable accurately; links it precisely to a feature of Tom's situation with a relevant Milgram figure.
- **3 marks** — Clear engagement but lacking detail.
- **2 marks** — Variable defined accurately but limited application.
- **1 mark** — Brief, partial answer.

**Indicative content** — credit ANY ONE situational variable applied to the stem:

- **Uniform** — the consultant wears a white coat and name badge, visible symbols of legitimate authority. Milgram found obedience dropped from 65% to 20% when the experimenter wore everyday clothes. Bickman (1974): 76% obedience to uniformed authority vs 19% to everyday clothes.
- **Location** — the hospital is a high-status, institutional setting that confers legitimacy. Milgram found obedience dropped from 65% to 47.5% in a rundown office.
- **Proximity** — the consultant is physically present, face-to-face. Milgram found obedience dropped to 20.5% when instructions were given by phone.

*Credit relevant reference to Hofling et al. (1966) — 21 of 22 nurses obeyed an unknown doctor by phone, highly relevant to the hospital setting.*

Outline what is meant by the Authoritarian Personality as an explanation of obedience.

**Marks for this question: AO1 = 3 marks**

- **3 marks** — Accurate outline including: (1) the Authoritarian Personality as a **dispositional** explanation (Adorno 1950); (2) two or more traits — rigid beliefs, conformity to norms, submissive to authority, focus on power and toughness, hostility to lower-status / out-group members; (3) reference to measurement (F-scale) OR origins (harsh parenting).
- **2 marks** — Accurate outline missing one of the three elements.
- **1 mark** — Brief, partial or muddled outline.

*Credit reference to Elms and Milgram (1966) — fully obedient participants scored higher on the F-scale.*

0 8

AO1 · 3 marks short answer

*Briefly explain the role of consistency, commitment and flexibility in minority influence.*

**Marks for this question: AO1 = 3 marks**

- **1 mark for consistency** — the minority holds the same view over time (diachronic) and within the group (synchronic). Supports certainty; Moscovici (1969): consistent condition produced 8.4% vs 1.25% inconsistent.
  - **1 mark for commitment** — willingness to suffer for the position (the **augmentation principle**); signals the cause is genuinely important.
  - **1 mark for flexibility** — willingness to adapt the position in response to counter-arguments (Mugny 1982 — being too rigid is unreasonable).
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0 9

AO1/AO3 · 3 marks short answer

*Briefly explain how social support can help a person resist pressure to conform or obey. Refer to research evidence in your answer.*

**Marks for this question: AO1 = 2 marks, AO3 = 1 mark**

- **2 marks** for mechanism: a dissenting ally breaks group unanimity, provides permission to resist and reduces normative pressure (also provides an alternative information source, reducing ISI).
  - **1 mark** for relevant research evidence:
    - Asch's variations — a single dissenter reduced conformity from 32% to 5.5%.
    - Allen and Levine (1971) — conformity dropped even when the dissenter wore thick glasses, showing the ally need not be credible.
    - Milgram's variations — obedience dropped from 65% to 10% when two confederate "teachers" refused.
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*Discuss types of conformity and explanations for conformity. Refer to the case of Maya as part of your discussion.*

**Mark this question against the level descriptors for the qualification the candidate is sitting.**

**If sitting AS — out of 12 marks. AO1 = 4, AO2 = 4, AO3 = 4.**

Level	Marks	Descriptor
4	10–12	Knowledge of types and explanations is accurate and generally well detailed. Application to Maya is effective and well integrated. Discussion is effective with appropriate evaluation. Clear, coherent and focused.
3	7–9	Knowledge evident with some accuracy. Application mostly effective but may not be fully integrated. Discussion mostly effective but limited.
2	4–6	Some accurate knowledge; application limited. Discussion superficial or mainly descriptive.
1	1–3	Knowledge limited; little or no application or discussion.
0	0	No relevant content.

**If sitting A-level — out of 16 marks. AO1 = 6, AO2 = 4, AO3 = 6.**

Level	Marks	Descriptor
4	13–16	Knowledge is accurate and generally well detailed. Application to Maya is effective and well integrated. Discussion is thorough and effective, with strong evaluation. Clear, coherent and focused.
3	9–12	Knowledge evident with some accuracy. Application mostly effective. Discussion mostly effective but limited in places.
2	5–8	Some accurate knowledge; application limited and partial. Discussion superficial.
1	1–4	Knowledge limited; little or no application or discussion.
0	0	No relevant content.

**Indicative AO1 content** (applies to both versions):

- **Types of conformity (Kelman 1958):**
  - **Compliance** — public agreement without private change; driven mainly by NSI; tends to be temporary.
  - **Internalisation** — public AND private change; genuinely accepted; driven mainly by ISI; tends to be permanent.
  - (2025 spec note — identification removed; credit if mentioned but do not penalise its absence.)
- **Explanations for conformity (Deutsch and Gerard 1955):**

- **Normative social influence (NSI)** — conforming to fit in / be accepted.
- **Informational social influence (ISI)** — conforming to be right; especially in ambiguous or unfamiliar situations.

**Indicative AO2 content** — engagement with Maya:

- **Initial compliance** — Maya "pretends" to dislike reading/music in front of her friends, even though she still loves them. Public change without private — classic **compliance**, driven by **NSI** (wanting to fit in at a new school).
- **Later internalisation** — "her tastes have genuinely begun to change" and she "agrees without thinking". Public AND private change — **internalisation**, driven by **ISI** (over time, she accepts her friends' views as correct in an unfamiliar new environment).
- **Trajectory** — Maya's pathway from compliance to internalisation maps onto the Kelman / Deutsch and Gerard framework.

**Indicative AO3 content:**

- **Strength of NSI** — Asch's (1956) variations: writing answers privately reduced conformity (supports NSI mechanism).
- **Strength of ISI** — Lucas et al. (2006): more conformity on difficult maths problems (supports ISI in ambiguous situations) — relevant to Maya in her unfamiliar new school.
- **Limitation — hard to distinguish:** Asch's dissenter provides both social support (NSI) and an alternative answer (ISI). The two-process model may oversimplify.
- **Limitation — individual differences:** McGhee and Teevan (1967) — high "need for affiliation" produces more conformity. Interactionist view is more complete.
- **Limitation — cultural bias:** Asch used American male undergraduates. Smith and Bond (1996) found higher conformity in collectivist cultures.

*Top-band answers (Level 4 at either qualification) will (1) clearly distinguish compliance from internalisation, (2) map Maya's trajectory from one to the other, (3) link compliance to NSI and internalisation to ISI with explicit reasoning. A-level top-band additionally requires substantial AO3 evaluation with at least two named studies.*